PORTUMNA CASTLE and its LORDS

MICHAEL Mac MAHON

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'Can it be imagined that a stranger should come into this county of Galway and think to compass his ends, and draw the people to him, if he does not profess to love the house of Clanricarde?'.

- *Ulick, 1st Marquess of Clanricarde* in 1642

MICHAEL Mac MAHON

From the library of
Danny Doyle
Raised on songs and stories

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Back Cover: Looking towards the town from the inner court.

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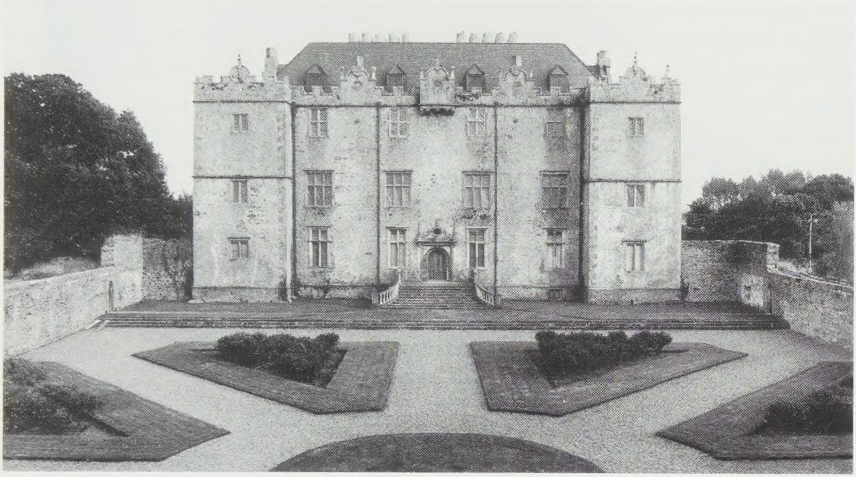


Photo courtesy Dúchas The Heritage Service.

Portumna castle, an imposing Jacobean mansion, is pleasantly situated on the oaklands that fringe the northern shore of Lough Derg on the river Shannon. Built before 1618 by Richard, 4th Earl, who was nicknamed *'Kinsale'*, Portumna remained the principal seat of the de Burgo Earls of Clanricarde until the castle burnt down in 1826. An ongoing scheme of conservation and partial reconstruction, begun in 1968 by the Office of Public Works and continued by Dúchas The Heritage Service, has virtually eliminated the outward signs of the conflagration and restored to the building much of its former dignity. The roof and massive chimney stacks have been replaced and there is limited access for visitors. The grand approach to the castle's main entrance on the north front through draped 'gothick' gates and conjoined courtyards has also been tastefully restored.

The surrounding demesne is nobly wooded. Acquired by the Forestry Department in 1948 for use as a wildlife sanctuary, it accommodates, among other things, a herd of fallow deer. There is an attractive leisure area as well with tastefully planned nature walks. On the lakeshore fronting the castle on the south a spacious new harbour proclaims Portumna's links with the growing tourist traffic on the river; but apart from this, modern development has scarcely intruded here and the demesne is still a 'haunt of ancient peace'. Only a bow-shot from the castle walls are the refurbished remains of a fifteenth-century Dominican Priory; and between this place and the water's edge once stood Portumna's 'black castle' of which only indefinite traces remain. Much of Portumna's past is in this place, and to stroll amid the ruins here is to walk into history.

That history begins with the de Burgos.

Portumna Priory.

De BURGO

Known variously as, de Burgo, de Burgh, Bourke and Burke, the family, as the name implies, were of Norman-French ancestry. The Irish de Burgos derive from William de Burgo, founder of one of the most powerful Anglo-Norman families, who came to Ireland with Prince John in 1185. His brother, Hubert, became Justiciar of England and virtual ruler of that country during the minority of Henry 111. William was granted a large fief stretching from Limerick to Cashel in the Golden Vale where the barony of Clanwilliam still bears his name. From the beginning a good relationship was forged with the native rulers and in 1193 William married the daughter of Donal Mór O'Brien, king of Thomond. This alliance secured his position in the region. Around this time too he appears to have received a speculative grant of Connaught; but apart from erecting bridgeheads at Portumna and Meelick on the Galway bank of the Shannon, very little progress was made in establishing a colony in the province. He died in 1205 and was buried in the Augustinian Priory which he had founded at Athassel on the banks of the Suir in Co.Tipperary.

William de Burgo was succeeded by his son Richard, afterwards known as Lord of Connaught. In 1226 the charter of Connaught lands which had previously been granted to his father was revived in his favour, giving him 'seisin' (i.e. legal title) of virtually the entire province with the exception of five cantreds bordering Athlone which were reserved for the support of the king's garrison there. Richard proceeded at once to put his grant into effect by military conquest; and thus began the great infeudation of Connaught by the de Burgos and other prominent Norman families such as the Berminghams (founders of Athenry), de Cogans, Prendergasts, de Angulos (now Costellos), Stauntons and others. The new settlers began to build walled towns such as Galway (Gaillimh, i.e. the foreigners) and Athenry, together with a network of lesser manors, burgage settlements and military tenancies.

SETTLEMENT

De Burgo chose Loughrea for the centre of his own manor, and built a castle there in 1236. From there to the Shannon the territory was heavily settled and a number of moated structures after the fashion of the early Norman motte-and-bailey 'castles' are still traceable in that district. The motte was simply a flat-topped mound hastily constructed and crowned with a wooden tower, and sometimes having a bailey or courtyard at its base for added protection. Many of the lesser tenancies however consisted of just a single farmstead surrounded by a moat. Some of these still survive in the shape of rectangular mounds, and their distribution gives a good indication of the extent of Norman settlement.

Portumna was settled early. The motte, now in ruins in the convent grounds, commanded an important bridging point where the Shannon narrows above

Lough Derg. A thriving Norman settlement grew up, and sometime before 1254 a Cistercian house affiliated to the prestigious Norman abbey of Dunbrody was established at Portumna under the patronage of William de Cogan. Its ruins are now incorporated in those of the later Dominican priory. A ferry across the Shannon, and the right to levy tolls for it, was held by Richard de Burgo, the 'Red Earl' in 1291 as part of the manor of Terryglass on the opposite shore. And it was probably this Richard who built the 'solid base of one castle with four towers of the height of twelve feet'–known today as Oldcourt– of which William de Burgo, the 'Brown Earl' was seised in 1333. It seems of interest to point out that 'the ferry' is the name still commonly applied by the local people to the river-crossing at Portumna Bridge.

EARLS OF ULSTER

Richard de Burgo was succeeded in the lordship of Connaught by his sons, Richard and Walter, in their turn. In 1265 the latter managed to acquire the Earldom of Ulster in exchange for the manor of Kilsheelan and some other estates in Munster. Already lord of Connaught since the death of his elder brother, Walter now became the first of a line of de Burgo earls of Ulster which lasted until the murder in 1333 of William the 'Brown Earl' in Carrickfergus castle at the hands of one of his tenants. After the earl's murder, his widow fled to England with her only child, Elizabeth, who was then only a few months old. In 1352 Elizabeth married Lionel Duke of Clarence, Edward 111's son. The couple had a daughter Phillipa, who afterwards married Edmund Mortimer, earl of March, from whom, by later descent, derived Richard, Duke of York, father of King Edward 1V. And thus, in the words of Curtis, 'the noble blood of Brian Boru flowed down through the Mortimers and the House of York to the present Royal House of England'.

On his marriage to the heiress of the 'Brown Earl', Lionel, in her right, became Lord of Connaught and 4th Earl of Ulster. An Inquisition taken at Dublin after his death in 1369 found that the manor (i.e. a Norman unit of land) of Portumna, amongst other lands, had formed part of his estate. In reality, however, Lionel had never enjoyed anything more than a 'paper lordship' in Connaught. Indeed, long before his time, a junior branch of the de Burgos represented by William Liath – the murdered Earl's cousin – had staked its claim to the ancestral lands in the west. William Liath's two sons, Ulick and Edmund - the latter was nicknamed 'Albannach' (i.e.The Scotsman) - were known to the English colony of the Pale as 'degenerate English', having long since adopted Irish manners and dress. The cliché 'more Irish than the Irish themselves' could well be applied to these two firebrands, who threw off all allegiance to England and carved out with their swords large areas of Connaught which they ruled over after the fashion of Gaelic chieftains. Between them they apportioned the lands of Connaught into the two great

lordships to which they gave their names – Upper and Lower Mc William. Ulick settled on the Galway lands where he founded the Clanricarde branch and Edmund upon the Mayo lands where he became ancestor of the Burkes of Mayo. Thereafter, for over two centuries, their descendants lorded it over their ancestral lands, albeit allegedly without legal title, until they received a 'regrant' of their estates from Henry V111 in 1543 under that astute monarch's policy of 'amiable persuasions'.

CLANRICARDE

'.....bound in with shame,
With inky blots, and rotten parchment bonds'.
— John of Gaunt in Shakespeare's *Richard II.*

The method by which Henry's policy was to be put into effect was known as 'surrender and regrant'. Under this scheme the Gaelic chieftains who held their lands by ancient Irish law, as well as those Anglo-Normans who could not prove title, were encouraged to surrender their lands to the king and receive them back again as feudal grants. By this means it was hoped that both groups would be merged into one class only – the king's loyal subjects.

Ulick, head of the Upper Mc William, surrendered to Henry and 'humbly besought pardon'. On 1 July 1543 he was created Earl of Clanricarde and Baron of Dunkellin, and confirmed in an estate consisting of six baronies in Co.Galway. Thrown in for good measure were the confiscated lands of the Augustinian monastery of Abbeygormican in the diocese of Clonfert. The heads of the other great families in the Gaelic parts of Ireland were similarly ennobled, and thus it was hoped that the introduction of English law, religion and language would be greatly facilitated. Inevitably, however, this break with the old order did not receive universal support among the lesser chieftains. For them the new arrangement spelt virtual disinheritance since henceforth their ancestral lands would pass in perpetuum to the eldest sons of the newly created lords in accordance with the English law of primogeniture.

And thus for several years they mounted a sniping campaign against the chieftains who had 'gone over'. Richard, the second earl of Clanricarde (1544-82), was derisively nicknamed 'Sassanach' (i.e.the Englishman) by his people for his adhesion to the English policy, and was opposed even by his own two sons – Ulick and the patriotically-styled Seán Na Seamair (John of the Shamrock). In 1576, however, they submitted to the Lord Deputy at Dublin; but, having crossed the Shannon on their return, and in sight of the castle of Athlone, they threw off their 'English clothes' and resumed Irish dress.

Next they proceeded to attack Athenry which was then being heavily garrisoned by the English. The Lord Deputy reported:

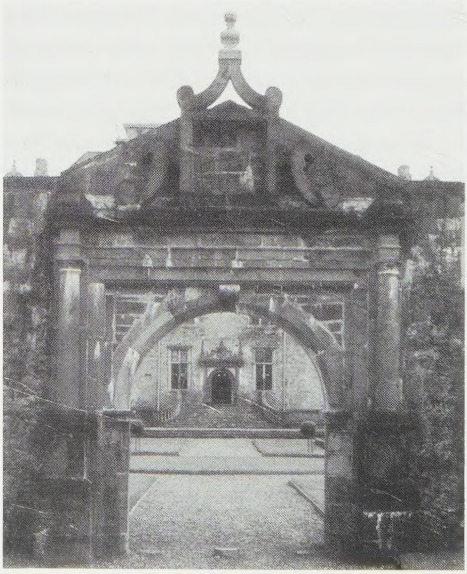
In this town was the tomb of their fathers and their mother was also buried

there; the chief church of which town they most violently burned, and Ulick being besought to spare the burning where his mother's bones lay, blasphemously swore that if she were alive and in it he would burn the church and her too rather than any English churl should inhabit or fortify there.'

Before Richard died in 1582, it is said he enjoined his sons to bow to the inevitable and to serve the crown as loyal subjects. Ulick, at least, seems to have obeyed, and in the agreement of 1584 – known as the *Compossicion of Connaught* – between the Connaught chieftains and the Lord Deputy, Sir John Perrot, he was handsomely rewarded. The *Compossicion* confirmed him in his vast estates in Co.Galway comprising the six baronies of Dunkellin, Kiltartan, Clare, Athenry, Loughrea and Leitrim. In addition he was granted the castle (i.e.the'black castle') or manor of Portumna 'and four quarters of land thereunto adjoining whereof he is said to be now seised as of his inheritance'. And it was on this property that his son, Richard, 4th earl, built his splendid manor house sometime during the first score years of the following century.

RICHARD, 4TH EARL OF CLANRICARDE

Richard was born sometime around 1566 and sent to England at an early age to be brought up as a ward of the earl of Essex. The practice of getting the sons of the Irish nobility to 'come to court' was already well established by that time as part of the government's plans for the anglicisation of Ireland.



The Tuscan Gate gives access to the Inner Court.

The first notice of Richard's career in England is to be found in the records of Christ Church College at Oxford where he matriculated on 18 December 1584. There followed in 1598 a Master's Degree in Arts, which he took as Baron Dunkellin. In the meantime there was probably a well-rounded military training, but of this we have no details. In any event, by 1597 his accomplishments were such that Essex could write to Sir Robert Cecil concerning Richard's 'fitness in himself to do Her Majesty's service'.

'I will therefore entreat you', he wrote 'to countenance him well for my sake, and to grace

him so much with my lord your father that the favourable letters of my lords make way for his advancement with my Lord Deputy of Ireland'.

And it was in Ireland that Richard next appeared, fighting at Lord Mountjoy's side against the Ulster rebels. At the final rout of the Irish at Kinsale he was amongst the Lord Deputy's most able generals, killing, it is said, twenty Irish rebels with his own hand; 'his garments being often pierced with shot and other weapons'. For his valour he was made a knight banneret on the field of battle and strode into history as Richard *of Kinsale*.

Other honours followed quickly. On his father's death in the same year, he succeeded to the Earldom of Clanricarde, and two years later he was made constable of Athlone and Keeper of the King's House there. He held the presidency of Connaught from 1604 until 1616, and in the latter year he was appointed Governor of Galway. In 1624 he was advanced to the English peerage under the title of Baron Somerhill and Viscount Tunbridge; and five years later Charles I conferred on him the Earldom of St. Albans together with the Irish dignities of Baron Immaney and Viscount Galway.

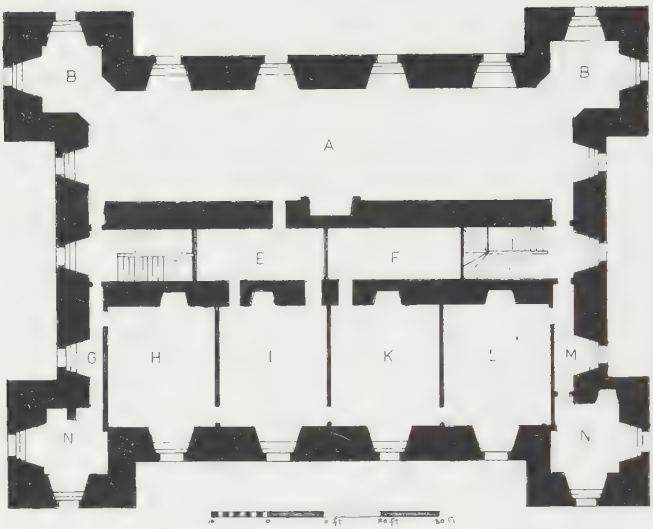
To add to his good fortune Richard married grandly: Frances Walsingham, whom he married before 3 April, 1603, was heiress to Elizabeth's late Secretary of State; she was also the widow of Robert (Devereaux), Earl of Essex, and before that of the poet and warrior Sir Phillip Sydney. Frances had a large fortune and Richard could now set about building country mansions in Ireland and England in keeping with the honour and dignity of his peerages.

The English seat at Somerhill near Tunbridge in Kent came first, probably around 1611. In March of that year a bricklayer-architect and a team of workmen had 'taken bargains of the Earl of Clanricarde who hath begun a house'. The architect was on forty marks a week. His name is not revealed though there is mention of one Kerwyn 'who shall have much to do for the earl of Clanricarde'.

Portumna cannot be so precisely dated, but it was completed sometime before 1618 at a cost of ten thousand pounds.

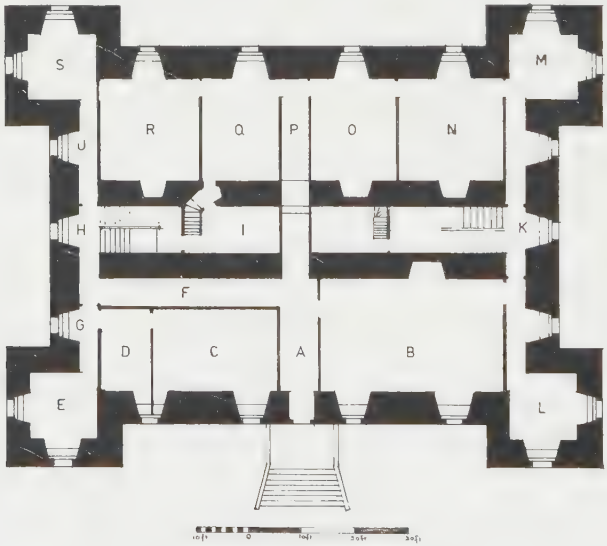
THE CASTLE

Although more conservatively designed than many of the Jacobean houses in England, Portumna represented a new stage in castle-building in Ireland where the defensible towerhouse, such as that at nearby Derryhivney, was still being built several years afterwards. Some of the defensive features of the earlier fortified castles are preserved, the most evident being the plan - a rectangular block with four flanking towers – and firing holes to allow the discharge of muskets from inside. The machicolation, too, placed centrally over the main entrance on the north front represents a survival of an earlier castle-building tradition which placed greater store on protection than on prestige. But there the comparison ends; for Portumna is essentially a house, a country mansion



Plan of top floor

A. Gallery; B. Music Room; C. Stairs; D. Stairs; E. Dark Room from the Back Stairs; F. Dark Room from the Back Stairs; G. Passage; H. Bed Chamber; I. Bed Chamber; K. Bed Chamber; L. Bed Chamber; M. Passage; N. Bed Chamber.



Plan of entrance floor, Portumna Castle.

A. Hall; B. Servants Hall; C. Butler's Pantry; D. Butler's Lodging Room; E. Bed Chamber; F. Passage, G. Passage, H. Stairs, I. Dark Room & Stairs, K. Stairs; L. Cabinet; M. Closet; N. Bed Chamber; O. Drying Room; P. Passage to Drying Room; Q. Drying Room; R. Bed Chamber; S. Closet; U. Passage.

(Courtesy Royal Irish Academy).

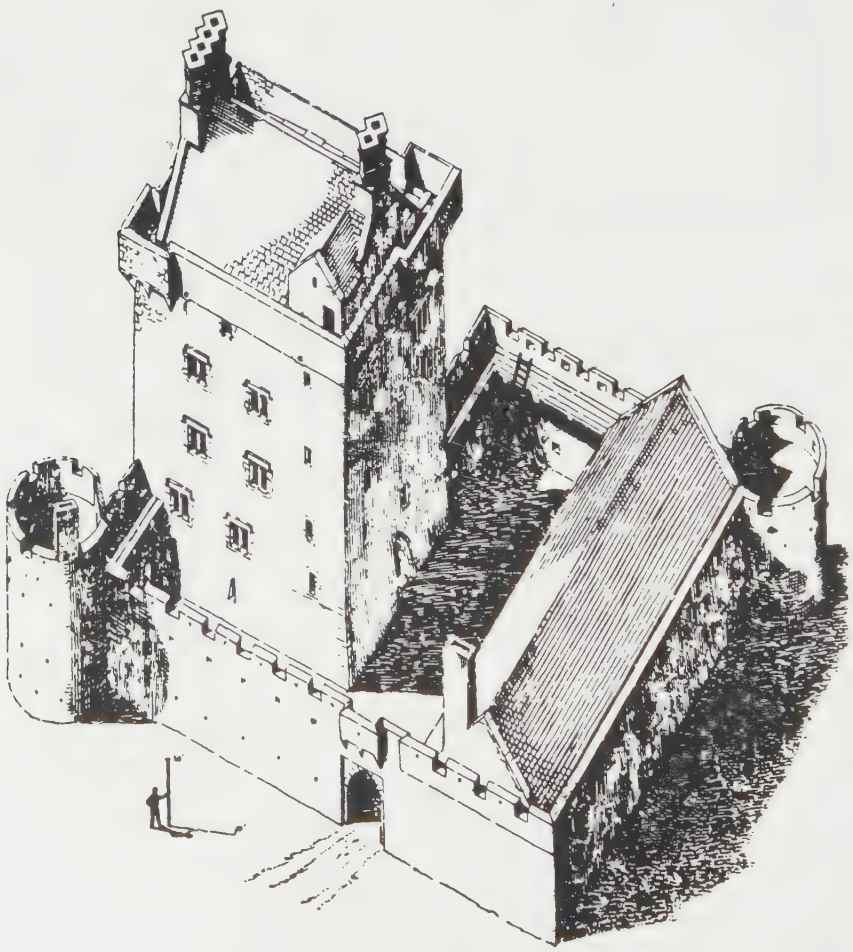
The South Front.

rather than a fortress. It stands three storeys above a basement and has large rooms lit by regularly placed windows of mullion and transom crosses. A beautifully-crenellated parapet is further embellished with semi-circular gables flanked by balls on pedestals. Other features of the house which proclaimed its affinities with the English 'country seat' were the central corridor which ran along the long axis of the building on all floors with staircases at its outer ends, and the long gallery or hall, measuring 26.5 metres long and 6 metres wide which extended the full length of the top floor on the south.

The castle, together with its long axial approach through a series of gateways and conjoined courtyards, represents an ensemble of buildings with a distinct air of classicism; but much of this effect was probably achieved by later additions and the original construction may very well have been much less imposing. The steps on the north front were certainly a later addition, as was the single-storey canted bay placed centrally on the south front which post-dates a sketch of the castle in 1791. (This latter building displays a curious plaque inscribed to the memory of a dog called 'Fury'). The gateway on the inner courtyards composed of Tuscan columns on which once rested the family armorials, may also have been a somewhat later addition.

The earliest known disposition of the rooms is found in a plan of unknown date in the Royal Irish Academy. The plan shows the servants' hall and butler's pantry on the ground floor, a surprisingly conservative arrangement which harks back to the days of the tower-house when it was customary for the lord and his family to live and dine in an upper apartment. But it is clear from an

eyewitness' account in 1808 that this arrangement had been altered by then, and probably for a long time before.. A rather inelegant service wing was added on the east side at some period but this was removed in recent times. The 'Grand Gates' on slender clustered pillars at the main entrance probably represent the latest addition to the castle complex. They are said to have been designed by Sir Richard Morrison (1767-1849), the Cork-born architect and author of *Useful and Ornamental Designs in Architecture*. Another example of Morrison's ornamental gateways can be seen at the entrance to Mount Desart, the former home of the Dunscombes at Currykippane, Co. Cork.



Derryhiveny castle, Co. Galway (built 1643) is a typical Irish fortified residence of the 'tower-house' class

A description of the castle and its furnishings in 1808 survives in the travel diary of Louisa Beaufort who toured Ireland in the years 1807-10:

'.... It stands on a flat and is an immense pile of building.....before it a broad flagged sort of terrace, to which you must mount by several steps, there is a ponderous carved door and a huge stone staircase. We entered a capacious hall, an ornamented screen had been begun of carved wood to separate the doorway and keep off any wind from the fireplace, but the lord fell into a bad state of health and the work stopped. Over a large fireplace is a stately chimney-piece of black marble and a piece of sculpture above it of three figures nearly as large as life representing Faith Hope and Charity. These and the decorations reach almost to the top of this lofty hall. There were other emblems and family banners placed there. We stepped from the great hall into the eating parlour – a large lofty room with two fireplaces – the windows high and narrow, not pointed, very distant from the ground, gives it a gloomy appearance. The ceiling is rich and heavy, not coloured, the wainscot dark red. Beyond it a breakfast room and my lord's dressing room and other chambers. They are all fitted up in the most appropriate castle style and there are several family pictures. A wide dark oak staircase leads you to the second storey where there is a suite of bedchambers, well furnished with back stairs and a wide variety of exits. Over the great hall is the grand drawingroom, of an uncommon length and well proportioned, the ceiling is extremely rich with very deep frieze, which the chimneypiece, a huge one of black painted stone reaches. the breadth is in proportion, the windows are square, not large, the frames of stone – the panels of the lower half of the window shutters looking glass, which had a beautiful effect. There is a fine view of the Shannon and distant country. The ceiling of the drawingroom is done with the richest stucco, the frieze broad and handsome. The border of the carpet made to match it. The chairs and every part appropriate. The top panes of the windows are done with painted glass, and every one of the towers is fitted up as a nice boudoir. It is indeed a very handsome and well-furnished room; for it is a pretty moderate sized drawingroom, their constant sittingroom – and from it an amazing suite of bedchambers. On the third floor is a room intended for a library, the whole breadth of the house. The floor has been stripped up, to new lay it, the joists and rafters appeared perfectly sound and uncommonly strong. The towers were intended to be fitted up as reading closets. The chimneys were plastered in much pattern work.

There are long straight walks gravelled, with shrubs thickly planted at each side, from the house down, grass in the middle, across is a railing and very antique gate, where carriages always stopped, and on entering the court, every gentleman was expected to take off his hat, and not put it on again, although it should hail, rain or snow. Lord Clanricarde always set this

Extract from Ordnance Survey Ireland. Government permit No MP 003800.

example to his company At about the distance from it that this fine pedimented gate is from the house, stands another, of no apparent use, and of equal distance from it is the gate of entrance from the road, very pretty and light.'

INQUISITION

Popular tradition holds that Richard spent very little time at Portumna, preferring instead his English estate at Somerhill. But this does not accord with contemporary correspondence which shows that he was very much in touch with affairs in Co.Galway. He was, however, residing in England when the political storm erupted over the projected plantation of Connaught, engineered by the Lord Deputy, Sir Thomas Wentworth, later Earl of Strafford.

The Grand Gates.

The *Compossicion* of Connaught in 1584 had secured the native chieftains on generous terms and Wentworth complained that the crown rents from that province were far too low. Plantation would generate extra revenue; moreover, it would help to secure a loyal population in a region where the inhabitants were still predominantly Gaelic and 'Old English'.

The fact that the *Compossicion* had never been ratified by parliament played into Wentworth's hands. In an attempt to give a veneer of legality to a proposed scheme of blatant confiscation he set up a series of Inquisitions for the purpose of finding that the titles of the Connaught chieftains were 'defective', and that the lands of that province were legally in the hands of the king. The English monarch's alleged claim to the lands of Connaught was said to derive from the marriage, almost three centuries earlier, of the de Burgo heiress to Lionel, duke of Clarence, when, according to feudal law, the lordship of Connaught merged with the crown. But, after a lapse of almost three hundred years, this claim could hardly be taken seriously for, aside from any other consideration, it ignored Henry V111's 're-grant' and subsequent de Burgo patents. Wentworth, however, badly needed the money to support a large army of occupation, and the Grand Juries which he empanelled in the various counties in Connaught were left in no doubt as to the consequences for themselves if they failed to co-operate with his scheme. The juries in Roscommon, Sligo and Mayo bowed to the pressure and found a title for the crown. Wentworth then turned his attention to the estates of the Earl of Clanricarde in Co.Galway whose rental income from the Connaught lands was reputedly greater than that of the king.

Mindful that he was taking on Ireland's premier Catholic peer, and that resistance was likely, the lord deputy decided to put on a show of strength. We are told that he arrived in Portumna accompanied by so large a train, amongst them four companies of foot soldiers and two troops of horse, that neither interested parties nor jurors were able to find places to lodge in the town. The lord deputy himself took up residence in Portumna castle and proceeded to open the Inquisition in the great hall. Aside from the business of land titles, it is said that he had an old political score to settle with Clanricarde, who, it appears, had attempted to block the lord deputy's appointment to Ireland in the first place. And this might explain his apparent ungentlemanly behaviour at Portumna: he was accused of having slaughtered deer in the parks, grazed his horses in the best meadows and 'cast himself in his riding boots on very rich beds'. The Galway jurors, however, many of whom were Clanricarde's own tenants, were not impressed. By way of protest some of them boycotted the proceedings and were duly fined two hundred pounds each. But those who allowed themselves to be sworn in were scarcely any more co-operative. An eyewitness reported

'During the time that the evidence was given for his majesty, there were

> some of the soldiers within the room with muskets charged and matches lighted. After we gave evidence for the country, the Lord Deputy did slight it and disvalue it publicly and spoke these words, *'ex magno conamine magno nugas'* (what great nonsense from so great an effort)'.

But despite the intimidation the jurors failed to find for the crown and Wentworth had them bound over for 'daring to be honest to the prejudice of my design'.

Next, he proceeded to expropriate their estates by Process of Exchequer. This resulted in a protracted legal wrangle in the course of which it was decided that the Inquisition should be taken anew. In November 1635 a petition was made to the king through the agency of Clanricarde but the Earl was now in failing health. He died at Somerhill a few days after the formal hearing was granted. At his funeral his son Ulick declared publicly that the Lord Deputy's harsh treatment had broken his father's heart. To this charge Wentworth is said to have retorted: 'they might as well have imputed to me for a crime his being three score and ten years old'.

ULICK 1ST MARQUESS AND 5TH EARL OF CLANRICARDE

Ulick de Burgo, Richard's only son, was born at Clanricarde House, Great Queen Street, London, before 8 December 1604 and succeeded his father in 1636. In the same year he was made Governor of Galway and on 21 February 1645 he was created 1st Marquess of Clanricarde by Charles 1. In 1622 Ulick married Lady Ann Compton, daughter of the Earl of Northampton by whom he had one daughter, Margaret, who married Viscount Muskerry, son of the Earl of Clancarty; and, secondly, Robert (Villiers) Viscount Purbeck.

When Ulick came into possession of his Irish estates in 1636 the proposed plantation of Galway was still a live issue. The Exchequer proceedings dragged on for several years, its conclusions delayed by a long-drawn-out trial of the unrepentant Galway jurors. The affair was further complicated by a dispute concerning the legality of the Clanricarde patents. In 1637 some of the smaller landowners capitulated, and a fresh Inquisition was held at which the king's title was finally found. Ulick, however, again petitioned the king claiming that the uncertainty surrounding his patents was threatening him with financial ruin. He was already faced with debts amounting to twenty-five thousand pounds. Ulick's influence at court at this time would appear to be considerable, for despite Wentworths's remonstrations that Clanricarde should be treated like everyone else, the king relented. By an order dated February 1639 Charles confirmed his patents in respect of all the lands formerly held by his father from King James, pointing out that the delay caused by the Inquisition 'is more than this nobleman's estate can well suffer'.

REBELLION

'I shall humbly offer it to your majesty's consideration, that a careful and vigilant eye be kept upon the proceedings and designs of those in the North that first began this business; they are generally of more haughty and ambitious spirits than those in the other parts of the country'.

- *Ulick 1st Marquess of Clanricarde* in 1641

Ulick was residing at Portumna when the country erupted in the Catholic uprising of 1641. The rebellion broke out first in Ulster but quickly spread to other parts of the country. Essentially the revolt was a reaction against the widespread colonisation by English and Scottish planters which had gone on relentlessly ever since the defeat of the Irish at Kinsale and the subsequent flight of the northern earls. The plantation was accompanied by a general enforcement of the English common law and the promotion of a State Church. The old native bardic schools were proscribed and a code of penal measures was introduced to debar Catholics from public office. The Inquisition on the Connaught land titles represented the most recent attempt to extend the plantation; and although it was frustrated to some extent by the influence of the Clanricardes and Strafford's subsequent fall from grace, it nevertheless brought the frustration of the ' old order' to boiling point.

The opportunity for rebellion was provided by the rift between the English parliament and Charles I which quickly developed into a 'war of three kingdoms'. In 1641 the dispossessed Ulster chieftains turned on the new colonists, driving them off their lands and plundering their crops and livestock. By August 1642 when the Royalists and Parliamentarians finally plunged into open civil war in England, the revolt in Ireland was widespread. In October native and Old English aristocracy, united in a common resolve to secure restitution of lands and liberty of conscience, formed the Irish Catholic Confederacy at Kilkenny. However, as the war in England progressed the Confederacy developed into a Royalist-Confederate alliance against a radical parliament which, it was feared, was determined to extirpate the Catholic religion.

The Earl of Clanricarde from the beginning remained aloof from the confederacy. Though sharing in the grievances of its members, the confederacy, as he saw it, was technically an unlawful body, having taken up arms without royal authority. Instead he adopted a pacifist stance, believing that political action would produce better results than 'the tumultuous compulsion that is used to force men to appear in arms, without knowledge or understanding how to behave themselves afterwards'.

As the only Catholic in the kingdom to be entrusted with office of government he deemed his position to be different from that of the rest of the Confederates. Any disloyalty on his part would, he believed, be seized upon by

the Lords Justices at Dublin as an excuse to accuse the Irish of waging a war of religion and therefore undeserving of redress for the many legitimate grievances which were at the root of the rebellion. To Clanricarde this was a point of 'high concernment, not only to myself, but the honour of the nation'. He explains his dilemma in a letter to Lord Gormanstown in 1643.

> 'It cannot be denied that my state and condition is far different from that of the others in this kingdom. I am entrusted by his majesty with a [task of] government, and the only catholic in his dominion that hath that honour conferred on him. I shall desire your lordship to take it into serious consideration, and so represent it, in what posture or condition I am most probable to discharge my duty to God, to my king, and to manifest my natural affection to my country, if I should break this trust by any doubtful ways of proceedings. Will it not be stated to his majesty, what hopes can there be of that nation or religion, when the Earl of Clanricarde, bred here from his childhood, of both ancient and recent extraction from hence, matched, allied, and estated here; honours conferred upon him, and never failing of your favour; a great power and command put into his hands in his own country; what greater ties could your majesty devise to oblige a man unto you?. If he does not regard those obligations, what can be done with such a people but to reduce them to total subjection?'
>
> On the other side, if I preserve myself in his majesty's favour will there not be a fair occasion given to my friends there to allege, that though great disorders were committed here by unruly multitudes, yet it was not the religion or intention of the nation to make it a national quarrel, or to shake off the English government, but to remove abuses, disgraces and oppressions put upon them by ill-disposed persons in authority there? For the Earl of Clanricarde whom you favoured and entrusted with command, though of that religion, and esteemed of great power there, yet no pretences, threats or persuasions, could disturb his integrity to your majesty. So that take away the occasions, remove those that oppress them, and give some encouragement by your favour and your majesty will certainly find them a loyal and dutiful people.'

As the king's governor of the town and county of Galway, Clanricarde saw his first responsibility as the maintenance of order in the county and the protection of His Majesty's subjects regardless of their religious persuasions. For a Catholic this required no little courage as it involved a course of action which sometimes isolated him from his own co-religionists. In fact, some of them charged him with 'secret practising'. Even among his own kinsmen there were many who were taking oaths and joining in the rebellion. And in a move clearly designed to damage his reputation among the English, Colonel John Burke marched a company of confederates into the abbey at Athenry and laid

their colours before the altar as mass was about to be said by Clanricarde's chaplain, who, 'in the sudden surprisal' blessed the banners.

When the rebellion first broke out the Earl made an examination of the strength of the government's forces in the county and found them badly furnished with arms. There was only one company of foot – his own – in the whole county and one hundred men in the fort of Galway. By the end of the year he reported that the county had broken out into great disorder. Most of the English had their cattle destroyed and were turning to him for protection for their lives. For his efforts on their behalf he was threatened and assaulted by the neighbouring counties. From Offaly and Tipperary the Mulloys, Coughlans, Kennedys and others were stealing across the Shannon and preying and spoiling to the very ferry-passage at Portumna. He was obliged to place garrisons at Clonfert, Meelick and Clontuskert and his own company at Portumna for the security of the town and of his own family. Within the county some of his own tenants were turning on him. His castle at Aughnanure in Connemara was surprised by Murrough O'Flaherty, 'a rash young man', and the islands of Clare and Inisboffin were taken by the O'Malleys. Until he was better supplied he could not venture into those remote parts to recover his property in case some ill-disposed persons might attack his English tenants who had sought refuge near his houses at Loughrea and Portumna.

The situation on his estate in England was little better:

> 'the unfortunate troubles here having put my affairs in England into that perplexed condition, that I know not how to relieve many of my friends and officers there, and that my estate is, or will be shortly extended for debt'.

Although firm in his belief that his country's best hope lay in the triumph of the monarchy over 'a bigoted parliament determined to grant no toleration in this kingdom', Clanricarde did not hesitate to protest to the king about the many grievances his countrymen had suffered at the hands of the crown, or to counsel a moderate approach to Irish affairs. And it was probably this kind of political courage which caused the lords justices at Dublin to have second thoughts about his loyalty. Their suspicions angered him and drew from him the protest:

> 'Whatever be the suspicions of some in England in regard to my religion, your grace may be assured that no accident, fortune or design shall ever rob me of the ancient honour my family hath gained, or put any stain upon my constant endeavours to serve his majesty to the utmost of my power'.

As the war in England dragged on it became increasingly obvious that the parliamentary forces were gaining the upper hand, and on 30 January 1649 Charles I was executed at Whitehall. Within a few months the office of king was abolished and England was declared a republic. All that now remained to bring

the war to an end was the suppression of the royalist-confederate alliance in Ireland which was still aligned on the side of the king's son. This task was entrusted to Oliver Cromwell, who arrived in Dublin on 15 August as Lord Lieutenant and General for the Parliament in England at the head of 20,000 men.

By the end of the following year the Irish resistance had collapsed and Ormond, the lord deputy, slipped out of the country leaving a commission to the Earl of Clanricarde to act in his place. Although the end was now in sight, Clanricarde, with singular courage, rallied the Irish armies and continued the fight in Connaught. In the summer of 1651 the parliamentary forces under Ludlow and Coote besieged his castle at Portumna. The defenders, 'having a long line to keep and many poor people within' surrendered upon terms. Having put a garrison in the castle, Ludlow pressed on towards Limerick taking with him tents and draught-oxen and many other things belonging to the earl. In June of the following year an attempt was made by Irish guerrilla forces under Richard Grace to retake Portumna castle; but, hearing that Colonel Ingoldsby was on the march from Limerick, the Irish dispersed after burning the town.

Meanwhile Clanricarde had gone to the defence of Galway. There he found the inhabitants on the verge of surrender in the hope of winning some degree of religious tolerance from the Cromwellians. Clanricarde opposed a settlement, but having failed to rally the citizens, he wrote to Ludlow that if the terms for surrender were not met 'Galway would sell its life dearly'. Believing that Galway had 'basely and perfidiously yielded', he left for Sligo vowing to resist to the end. Old friends like lord Westmeath and Phillip Mc Hugh O'Reilly were invited to join forces with him at Sligo and 'unite in one clear score for God, our king and country'.

Despite large-scale surrender over the next few months Clanricarde refused to lay down his sword. He managed to capture the strategic fortress of Ballyshannon, but it was later retaken by the Cromwellians after he had pushed into Donegal. When his forces were finally surrounded in the Isle of Carrick at the end of June, he saw that further resistance was hopeless and surrendered upon terms. After being stripped of his vice-regal authority he was allowed passage out of Ireland accompanied by six servants with travelling arms and ammunition. He retired to his estate at Somerhill in Kent and died there in July 1657. In the meantime his Irish estates were confiscated; and by an order dated 2 March 1657 Portumna castle with an attaching estate of 4,864 statute acres was settled on Henry Cromwell, the Lord Protector's youngest son, and the new commander-in-chief of the parliamentary forces in Ireland.

HENRY CROMWELL

Henry was appointed Lord Deputy in 1657 and Lord Lieutenant in 1659. The great business in Ireland at that time was the plantation of the country by

'adventurers' and soldiers. Under the terms of an Act of Settlement in 1652 Catholics who had forfeited their estates by reason of their part in the recent rebellion were obliged to remove themselves to the poorer lands of Connaught and Co. Clare to make way for Cromwellian officers and speculators who had financed the parliamentary campaign. A total of two-and-a-half million acres was set aside for that purpose.

Henry Cromwell.

When the spoils were being shared out Henry was well positioned to feather his own nest. A hint was dropped to parliament that the Clanricarde estate at Portumna would be very acceptable in settlement of arrears of pay due to him. The president of Connaught, Sir Charles Coote, had gone in person to inspect the property and reported favourably. Most of the tenants were English and were eager to make improvements. The demesne together with the town would yield £685 a year. There were some other lands as well amounting to about 1700 acres lying 'in a waste country on the Shannon side and at present, I fear, will not yield much, yet it is good land and nobly wooded and in future may rise to a considerable interest.' Henry gave orders for various improvements on the estate and employed a London architect named Daniel Thomas who had several noteworthy buildings to his credit including the Inn of Chancery and Southampton House. It was proposed to build a new bridge across the Shannon to replace the old ferry passage. For this purpose Thomas promised to bring over some experienced English sawyers:

> Sawyers especially English both in Dublin and all the nation over are very rare and scarce to be had, that if I should put with them now this winter, both them and the slaters I should not have them again nor could I get others, they are so hard to be had. Therefore I should be so worthy to know certainly whether the bridge of Portumna will be built or not...whether of timber or stone it matter not, yet I could employ them preparing for it until a contract be made. The people of the country are so overjoyed at your lordship's good intentions for a bridge that they are exceeding ready to answer you in anything your honour will desire for the settling it forward.

If given precise instructions Thomas promised to speedily settle into the work at Portumna so that 'by this time twelve month I would by God His good assistance be able to give your excellency a great and good account'. He

would also bring over 'good English families' to settle on the estate. He complained that some of the Irish workmen had run away from him:

> 'for since the oath of abjuration is come amongst them, they had rather do any man's work than build places of strength which may subdue them and keep them in obedience'.

RESTORATION

In June 1658 Lord Clanricarde's widow wrote to Henry regarding certain lands at Portumna settled on her at her marriage as part of her jointure. She was aware that Henry was ready not only to afford justice 'but favours also to all that have a title to pretend them from you'. She therefore humbly offered her right and estate in Portumna and the lands adjoining to Henry, beseeching him to allow such recompense in lieu of them as he might think fit. Lady Clanricarde was obviously encouraged by the changing political winds for by that time plans were well in hand for Charles 11's triumphant return from exile in France to reclaim the monarchy. Henry himself was abruptly recalled to England in the following year. His changed fortunes are reflected in a dejected speech which he delivered in the House of Commons on his return:

> 'I was lately Lord Deputy of Ireland, but now poor, miserable, dejected, disrespected, unprotected Henry Cromwell'.

With the restoration of Charles 11 to the throne in England the Clanricarde star rose again in the political firmament. The estates were restored by special declaration of the king in April 1662, but with certain 'reprisals' to Henry

The castle parkland is now a wildlife sanctuary.

Cromwell. Although he was offered Portumna castle and park for his lifetime Henry declined the offer, remarking to Ormond, the Viceroy: 'I am so conscious of Lord Clanricarde's better service to His Majesty than of my own'. This was in March of 1662 before the king had made the order restoring the Clanricardes. Henry, having already seen the writing on the wall, had sold off portions of the Portumna property to various purchasers including the Russells, barons of Laighorn, one of whom later married his youngest sister.

Henry never again returned to Portumna after his recall in 1659. On 5 September he was granted a licence by the Council of State to transport from Ireland to any part of England of his choice, his horses, goods and household effects. He purchased a small estate at Spinney Abbey, near Cambridge, in the name of Sir William Russell and lived there in virtual obscurity until his death in 1667.

RICHARD, 6TH EARL OF CLANRICARDE

When Ulick died in 1657 without male issue, the Marquessate, which was limited to male heirs, became extinct but the earldom descended on his cousin Richard as heir general. This Richard had held a command of the royalist forces in Connaught under the Marquis in the rebellion of 1641. He had also been imprisoned in England for alleged complicity in a royalist plot there. When he took his seat in the House of Lords in 1661 Richard was granted of a pension of fifteen hundred pounds until he should be restored to his estates. He married the daughter of Walter Butler, Earl of Ossory and Ormond.

When Richard inherited in 1662 the estate was heavily in debt. Moreover, a financial settlement had to be made in respect of the lands settled on Ulick's widow for her jointure. These had been decreed in the previous year to her son-in-law, Viscount Muskerry, as an 'innocent person', reserving the usual rents and duties to the crown. Securing the release of all those interests proved to be a difficult and expensive business which eventually ended up in litigation and in-fighting between the parties concerned. Richard in turn died without male issue in 1666 and was succeeded by his brother William who, like himself, had held a command in the royalist army in the 1640s.

WILLIAM 7TH EARL

William became lieutenant of Co.Galway in 1680 and chief governor thereof in 1687. He married firstly Lettice Shirley, a grand-daughter of the earl of Essex, and afterwards Helen Fitzgerald, widow of Sir John Fitzgerald of Dromana, Co. Waterford, and a daughter of Donough Mac Carthy, the 1st earl of Clancarty and of Eleanor (Butler), sister of James (Butler), 1st duke of Ormond. He died in 1687 'leaving the character of a nobleman of exemplary piety, accomplished education and great honour'.

RICHARD, 8TH EARL

Richard, the 8th earl, was Williams's son by his first wife, Lettice Shirley. He was the first of the family to adopt the Protestant faith, but this was probably little more than a temporary political expedient for he was afterwards made a privy councillor to James 11. In 1680 he was made a baron in the Irish peerage by writ of summons from Charles 11 who wrote to his father:

> 'Having out our special grace and favour to your son, the Lord Viscount Dunkellin, thought fit to put him into several commissions of trust and honour in that our kingdom, and to order our chancellor there to issue out our gracious writ of summons to him whereby he may take his place as baron in our House of Peers in the next parliament to be held in Ireland'.

Charles went on to congratulate the new baron on being thoroughly instructed in the Protestant religion, having forsaken that of Rome 'which hath always given jealousies to the Crown'.

In 1669 Richard married Elizabeth Bagnall, a 'court beauty', daughter of Lord Bagnall, Page of the Backstairs to James 11. The duchess of Ormond wrote that his marriage had greatly troubled all his friends and that 'this unhappy man has brought ruin on himself and his family'. Her comments probably reflect the family's disappointment at Richard's failure to 'marry money' which was then badly needed to pay off some of the Clanricarde debts.

AFTER AUGHRIM

The Clanricarde family suffered heavily in the Jacobite war. Richard commanded a regiment of infantry in king James's Irish army in 1689. He fought at Aughrim but, as governor of Galway, he surrendered that town to Ginkel two weeks after the battle and thus saved his property from confiscation. It was said of him that 'he inherited neither the courage nor the loyalty of his ancestor, the great earl of St.Albans; he compounded his honour for personal security, and quitting the service of James, he remained at Galway, though by the surrender he was at liberty to march to Limerick'. He died without male issue sometime after 1708.

JOHN, LORD BOPHIN, 9TH EARL

Richard's brother and heir, John, baron of Bophin, also fought in king James's army and was taken prisoner on the field at Aughrim on 12 July, 1691. Attainted of treason, his estate was declared forfeit and bestowed on king William's close friend, the Duke of Albemarle. Portumna castle was occupied by a Williamite garrison under Major Hamilton who waged a local war with

Jacobite guerrillas. Some twelve years later John prevailed on the English parliament to pass a private Act reversing his outlawry, but at a heavy price. He was obliged to pay a fine of £25,000 and to have his estates put into the hands of trustees for the benefit of his two eldest sons, who were to be brought up in the Protestant religion at Eton College. The trustees reported in 1703 that only £10,000 had been paid, but a further Act was passed extending the time for payment. He was eventually absolved of all treason and succeeded his brother in the family estates as ninth earl of Clanricarde.

In 1684 John married Mary Talbot of Templeogue, Co. Dublin, by whom he had nine children. He died in 1722, aged 82.

A younger brother, Ulick, also commanded a regiment of infantry in King James's army. Like his brothers he, too, fought at Aughrim, but lost his life on the battlefield at the youthful age of 22. He was married to the daughter of George (Lane) Viscount Lanesboro'. She was still living in 1724. John's sister, Honora, married the Jacobite general Patrick Sarsfield, earl of Lucan, probably in 1691. The local tradition at Portumna is that the marriage took place in the Dominican Priory beside the castle. They had one son who became 2nd earl of Lucan and died in Flanders without leaving male issue. Sarsfield himself was killed at the battle of Landen in July, 1693, and two years afterwards Honora married secondly James (Fitz-James) Duke of Berwick, the eldest natural son of King James 11. They had one son who later became Duke of Liria. He served for a time as ambassador to Phillip V of Spain and died at Naples in 1738.

Honora's sister Margaret married Brian Mc Guinness, Lord Iveagh, of Co.Down. Having fought on the Jacobite side at the battle of the Boyne, he fled with the Wild Geese and joined the army of Austria. He was killed soon afterwards. Although Margaret married, secondly, Colonel Thomas Butler of Kilcash, it is as lady Iveagh that she is best remembered. For lady Margaret Butler is the esteemed 'Lady Ivá' celebrated in one of the best known poems in the Irish language namely *Cill Cais*, of which there are many translations. The poem, as almost every Irish schoolboy knows, is the famous lament for the fall of the Catholic branch of the Butlers at Kilcash in south Tipperary. The author, Reverend John Lane, was educated at the expense of the great lady of Kilcash herself, who was well known for helping to educate and shelter priests during the Penal Days. In 1758 Lady Margaret's youngest son, John Butler, became the 15th Earl of Ormond.

MICHAEL, 10TH EARL

Lord Bophin's eldest son, Michael, lord Dunkellin, succeeded his father in 1722 as 10th earl of Clanricarde. Educated at Eton and Oxford, he conformed to the established church and from this point onwards it could be said that the family fulfilled a typical ascendancy role. In 1714 lord Dunkellin married a

wealthy widow, Lady Ann Parker, daughter of John Smith, a governor of the bank of England. She is said to have had an income of £800 a year, a large house and £25,000 in cash.

Lord Bophin's younger sons, however, remained Catholic and carved out very different careers from those of their older brothers. After the collapse of the family fortunes at Aughrim they went into service abroad in the armies of the Wild Geese. Ulick advanced to the rank of colonel in the French service and was living in 1757. Edward joined the Irelanda regiment in Spain and was promoted to lieutenant general for his bravery in the battle of Campo-Santo in Italy in 1743. He died at Bologna in the following year from a wound received in the battle. Another brother, William, was killed at Fontenoy in 1745. They are remembered in Davis's poem *The West's Awake.*

JOHN SMITH DE BURGH, 11TH EARL

John was the second son of the 10th earl, an elder brother having died before succeeding. He was born in 1720 and educated at Winchester. By royal licence he adopted the name de Burgh in lieu of Bourke. In 1740 he married Hester Amelia whose father was baronet of Stoke Dabernon. He died at Portumna on 21 April 1782 and was buried in the ancient de Burgo tomb at Athenry.

HENRY DE BURGH, 12TH EARL AND 2ND. MARQUESS

Son of John Smith de Burgh. He served as M.P. for Galway in 1768-69 as lord Dunkellin and was governor of that county from 1782 until his death. He was created Marquess of Clanricarde in 1789, no other Marquessate except that of Kildare then existing in the Irish peerage. In 1785 Henry married Urania Anne, daughter of the Marquess of Winchester. He died without issue at Portumna castle in 1797 and was buried at Athenry. On his death the Marquessate of Clanricarde became extinct.

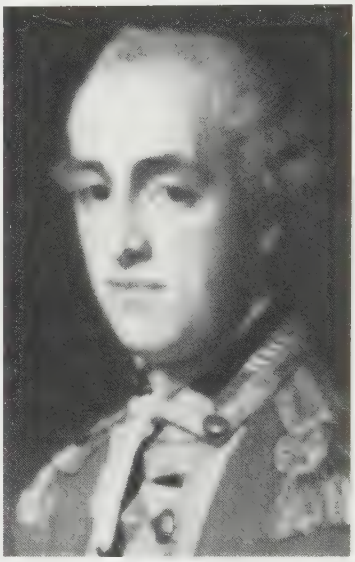
JOHN THOMAS DE BURGH, 13TH EARL

Born in 1744, John was the 12th earl's only brother. He had a distinguished military career and rose to the rank of full general in the British army. In 1793 as colonel de Burgh he raised the regiment known as the Connaught Rangers for the service of his majesty under the Clanricarde standard. In the Connaught Journal of 25 September 1793 a notice proclaimed:

> All spirited young men desirous of entering into the Royal Regiment of the Connaught Rangers are desired to apply immediately to Capt. Henry Shewbridge at Portumna ; the Rev. Armstrong Kelly, Portumna castle, or to Bricknell at Loughrea. Great encouragement will be given as non-

commissioned officers to any properly qualified young men of the late volunteer corps, or who have lately quit his majesty's services with good characters.

For over one hundred years thereafter men of this celebrated regiment – known as the 88th – fought and died for the empire in Europe, Asia and South Africa until the atrocities of the Black-and-Tans in Ireland during the War of Independence caused them to mutiny in India in 1920. The Rangers were finally disbanded in 1922.



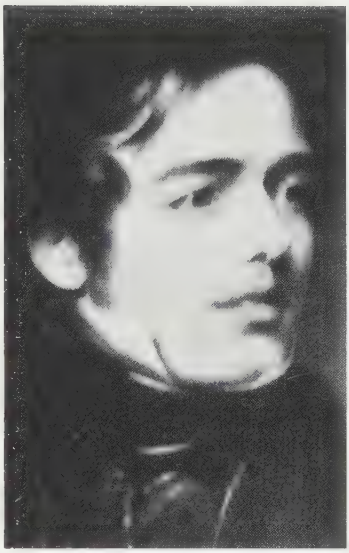
John Thomas de Burgh, 13th Earl of Clanricarde (1744-1808).

On the 29 December 1800 (the last date of creation of Irish peers before the Union), John Thomas de Burgh (having then no son) was created Earl of Clanricarde in the Irish peerage with remainder, failing male issue, to his first and every other daughter in seniority and to the heir of such daughter. He held the governorship of Hull from 1801-08. In 1799 he married his cousin, Elizabeth Burke of Marblehill, Co.Galway, by whom he had one son, Ulick John, and two daughters, one of whom married the Marquess of Sligo – a union which later resulted in the earldom of Clanricarde becoming merged in that marquessate. John died at Dublin in 1808, aged 63. His tomb can be seen in the Dominican priory at Portumna.

ULICK JOHN DE BURGH 14TH EARL

John Thomas was succeeded by his only son,Ulick. Born in 1802 at Belmont, Hants., he had a distinguished political career which probably owed something to his marriage in 1825 to Harriet Canning, the only daughter of George Canning then leader of the Whig party and soon to become Prime Minister. Ulick became Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in 1826, but the Prime Minister died in the following year and Ulick failed to secure an appointment in the new government. In the meantime he was created Marquess of Clanricarde in 1828 and Baron of Somerhill in the following year. A period as Ambassador to Petersburgh (1838-41) preceded his return to political office in 1846 as Postmaster General, a post he held for six years. When Palmerston became Prime Minister in 1858 Clanricarde was again appointed to the cabinet, this time as Lord Privy Seal, but the government fell

after only six weeks and he was never called on again. In fact it is said that Clanricarde himself may have contributed to the downfall of the government; at that time he was the subject of much unfavourable comment in *The Times* arising from his alleged part in a scandal which became public in a notorious court case Handcock v Delacour.



Ulick de Burgh, 14th Earl of Clanricarde (1802-1874). Lord Privy Seal 1858. Married Harriet Canning 1825.

During Ulick John's lifetime Portumna castle was ravaged in 1826 by an accidental fire which consumed the furniture and fittings and reduced the building to a gutted and roofless shell. Following the conflagration a range of stables and offices to the east of the castle were fitted up as a temporary family residence. In 1830 it was described by Countess Clanricarde as 'a very tolerable house ... as flourishing as possible'. Sometime in the 1860s a large house designed by Thomas Deane was commenced about a mile from the old site, but was never completed due possibly to the death in 1867 of the heir apparent, another Ulick, then a popular M.P. for Co. Galway. In 1922 this 'new castle', as it was known, also burnt down. Some thirty years later the

The agent's house and estate offices. (Courtesy Dúchas The Heritage Service).

The 19th Century 'New Castle' has disappeared without trace.
(From a drawing by Mary Arrigan).

remaining shell was dismantled to provide building material for St. Brigid's Catholic church at Portumna.

The Marquess died on 10 April 1874 at No. 17 Stratton Park, Picadilly, aged 71. He was described by a contemporary as 'immensely rich, quite good-looking enough, clever and very gentlemanlike'.

Lord Clanricarde's eldest son, christened Ulick Canning de Burgh, entered the army and became a lieutenant-colonel in the Coldstream Guards. He saw active service in both the Persian and Crimean wars. In the former he contracted nephritis from which he eventually died; and in the latter was taken prisoner at Sebastapool in 1854. He was released by the Tsar as a mark of respect to his father, the former ambassador. He later became military secretary to his uncle Lord Canning when he was governor general of India in 1856.

In 1865 Ulick, styled Lord Dunkellin, became one of the two MPs for county Galway; the other was William Gregory of Coole. The two joined forces with a larger group who were opposing a bill for electoral reform, and gained the distinction of having brought down the Whig government. Dunkellin was regarded as an effective parliamentarian; he was a brilliant speaker and a popular personality. His political career ended abruptly, however, in 1867 with his untimely death at the age of 40.

HUBERT GEORGE DE BURGH-CANNING, 15TH EARL AND 2ND MARQUESS OF CLANRICARDE (3RD CREATION), 1832-1916

Hubert George, the 15th and last earl of Clanricarde, was born in 1832 and educated at Harrow. He served as attache at Turin in 1852 and as second secretary there in 1862. By royal licence in 1862 he took the name Canning after de Burgh in compliance with the will of his uncle, Earl Canning, under which he is said to have received an inheritance of £250,000. In 1867, as

Viscount Bourke, he succeeded his brother as a liberal M.P. for Co.Galway and held the seat until 1871. On the death of his father some three years later, Hubert George, being then the only surviving son, succeeded to the Clanricarde estate and title. In 1883 the estate consisted of 56,826 acres in Co. Galway, valued at £24,358 a year.

Hubert de Burgh, the last Lord Clanricarde. He died unmarried in 1916.

AGRARIAN CONFLICT

During the agrarian upheavals that characterised the final decades of the nineteenth century in Ireland Clanricarde was rarely out of the headlines. The agitation, or 'land war' as it came to be known, was precipitated by a crisis in agriculture that, in the winter of 1878-9, threatened large sections of the rural population with a disaster comparable with that of the great famine. Tensions caused by the general distress sometimes erupted in violence and formed a basis for the setting up of the Land League in 1879. The League was meant to be a kind of tenants' trade union for the purpose of preventing rack-renting, evictions and the 'grabbing' of evicted farms. Soon, however, it became a powerful mass-movement which eventually managed to bring about a radical reform of the landlord system in Ireland.

From the beginning the Marquess of Clanricarde refused to recognise the League or to countenance any reduction of his rents, insisting that these were already low and must be paid under pain of eviction. The harshness with which he enforced his proprietorial rights soon became legendary and earned him the sobriquet 'Lord Clanrackrent'.

In 1886 eruptions in the Woodford portion of the Clanricarde estate were particularly virulent. There a tenants defence association put up spirited resistance to evicting parties of 'emergency men' and bailiffs backed up by police and military. In one instance an attempted eviction developed into a violent confrontation lasting several days and made international headlines as the 'Siege of Saunder's Fort'. By 1891 it is estimated that over 200 families had been evicted on the estate, some of them amid scenes of bloodshed and riot.

The events at Woodford played an important part in the agrarian revolution of the late nineteenth century. Some leading international papers including the *The Irish World* of New York and *The Boston Pilot* sent special correspondents to Ireland to cover the land war and their reports helped to convince British statesmen of both parties that the landlord system as it existed in Ireland was

in need of radical reform. Clanricarde's intransigence and his point blank refusal to reinstate any of his tenants who had taken part in the so-called Plan of Campaign became a source of embarrassment to the government. Birrell, who was appointed Secretary for Ireland in 1907, described the Marquess as 'a danger and a disgrace to the community' and accused him of having his estate 'haunted by the ghosts of murdered men'.

As early as 1886 W.T.Stead, editor of the prestigious *Pall Mall Gazette*, who had himself visited Galway in order to view at first hand the happenings on the Clanricarde estate, made the prophetic comment:

> 'All over Ireland, 'Woodford' has been the watchword of agitation, and ... the whole story of it [landlordism in Ireland] from first to last is bound up with the Clanricarde estate. Alike in glory and in shame, the Clanricardes have played a leading part in the great drama of foreign domination, and it would be but in keeping with all that has passed that it should be in a war against Clanricarde that the Irish revolution of our day should win its final and crowning victory'.

Within twenty years of the formation of the Land League the sharper aspects of the tenurial system had been dismantled by a succession of reforming Land Acts. A system of state-aided land purchase had been put in place under the control of the Land Commission and Ireland was rapidly becoming a nation of peasant proprietors. However,almost another twenty years would elapse before the struggle came to an end for Clanricarde's long-suffering tenants. During all that period the Marquis stubbornly refused to co-operate with the Land Commission or to accept the principle of compulsory sale when it was introduced in legislation in 1907 and 1909. He resisted in the courts all efforts by his tenants to purchase their holdings until eventually his estate was compulsorily expropriated by the Land Court in 1915.

What kind of man was Clanricarde whose confrontation with his tenants became a major element in the folklore of the land war? The Marquess never married and by all accounts spent a good deal of his later years living as an eccentric recluse in rooms in the Albany Club in Picadilly. Notwithstanding his great wealth his reputation for parsimonious living became so notorious that accounts of his life tend to portray him in caricature. In his person and dress he presented such an uncouth appearance that he frequently became the butt of journalistic jibes. One account mentions his

> 'frock coat and even his hat held together by rough stitching, his cravat secured round his neck by a piece of old tape in which however he wore a family jewel of great value ... a favourite scarf-pin of his was a large diamond; at the back of which he was fond of inserting a piece of coloured paper painted by himself with the aid of a child's colour box'.

Another account relates that during the Austrian War, while still a young man

in the diplomatic service, he was arrested as a spy by the French, who refused to believe that their shabbily dressed prisoner was an English aristocrat assigned to the Foreign Office.

A sketch of the Marquess by the well known cartoonist, 'Spy', of *Vanity Fair* has helped to reinforce the popular image. Over the caption "Old Wares" it shows an outlandishly attired, mad hatter figure with a large bag in one hand and a pair of large boots equipped with ice skates held in the other claw-like hand. Incredible as it seems, the Marquess, though he was then in his seventies, became a devotee of ice skating when ice rinks became fashionable in London in the early 1900s. He became a familiar figure at the rinks carrying skates, a bag of buns and an umbrella. He died in 1916 at the age of 84 and was buried in Highgate cemetery in London.

THE NEW ORDER

At the death of Hubert George de Burgh-Canning the Marquessate of Clanricarde became extinct and the earldom, in accordance with the remainder terms of the creation of 1800 was inherited by his cousin the Marquess of Sligo and became merged in that title. Another cousin - a great-nephew Henry George Viscount Lascelles, afterwards sixth earl of Harewood - inherited Clanricarde's entire estate of £2,500,000, including Portumna castle and demesne. The circumstance which led to Viscount Lascelles' stroke of good fortune are described by his son, the seventh Lord Harewood, in *The Tongs and the Bones*.

Lady Elizabeth de Burgh, granddaughter of the Prime Minister, George Canning, and sister of the last Lord Clanricarde. She married Henry Lascelles, 4th Earl of Harewood, in 1845.

"My father inherited a fortune from an eccentric great-uncle, Lord Clanricarde whose sister married my great-grandfather, and whose mother was the daughter of Lord Canning, the Prime Minister. My father was wounded several times in the 1914-18 War and once, on leave, he was going to lunch in the St. James' Club when he recognised his great-uncle sitting in a corner. Lord Clanricarde was not at all popular in London, any more than in Ireland, where he had property; in fact he seems to have been a very disagreeable old man. In any case my father, out of manners went to sit with his great-uncle for half an hour before lunch. In 1916 Lord Clanricarde died, leaving all his money to my father, to the great fury of my grandfather."

Viscount Lascelles was educated at Eton and Sandhurst after which he took

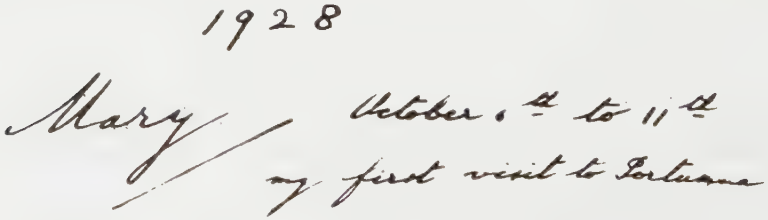
up a career in the diplomatic corps. He fought with distinction in the First World War, earning the badge of the Distinguished Service Order and the French honour the *Crois de Guerre.* In 1922 he married Mary, afterwards Princess Royal,only daughter of George V and Queen Mary. Seven years later Viscount Lascelles succeeded his father's as sixth lord Harewood. In 1943 he was installed as grand master of the united grand lodge of English Freemasons.

Henry Lascelles, 6th Lord Harewood (1882-1947). He married Princess Mary (later Princess Royal) in 1922.

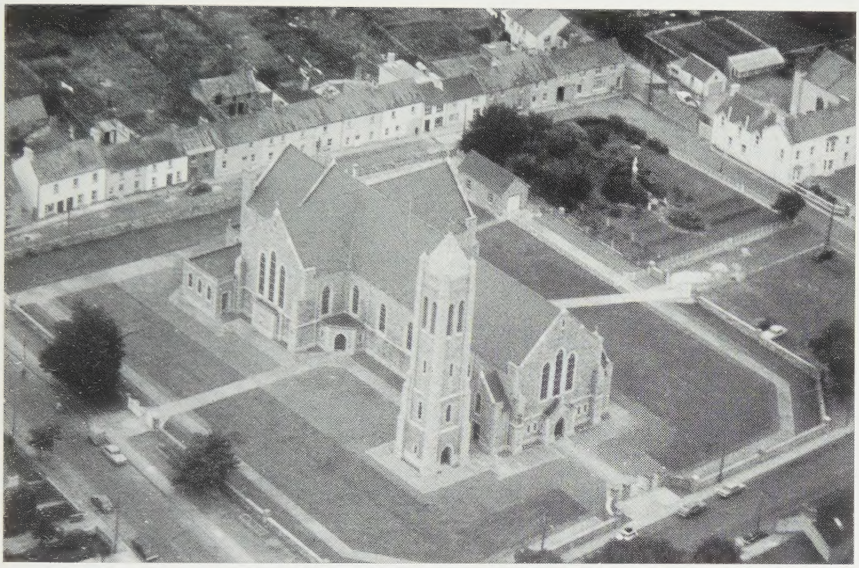
When he inherited "the Clanricarde millions" Lord Harewood proposed to restore the castle at Portumna and engaged John Bilson, a noted architect from Hull, to prepare plans. However, the deterioration in Anglo-Irish relations caused by the War of Independence, and the political fallout from Lord Harewood's marriage to Princess Mary, caused the scheme to be abandoned. In the event the princess saw Portumna castle on only one occasion, during a brief visit with her husband in October 1928.

Heavy demands were made on the Harewood estate during the two world wars when the family seat in Yorkshire served as a hospital. Lord Harewood himself died in 1947. His elder son, George Henry Hubert Viscount Lascelles, fought in the Second World War and was wounded and taken prisoner while serving with the Grenadier Guards in Italy in 1944. When he succeeded to his father's earldom after the war he found his 20,000-acre property burdened with an estate duty amounting to £0.75m. When the sale of part of the estate became inevitable Portumna was the first to go; the demesne comprising some 1400 acres falling to the Irish Land Commission in 1948 for the sum of £12,000.

The castle - a charred ruin since the fire of 1826- subsequently passed into the care of the Board of Public Works for preservation as a national monument and more recently to that of Dúchas The Heritage Service of the Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands.



Princess Mary's signature on the visitors book of Portumna Castle.



St. Brigid's Church, Portumna, built from the stones of the 'New Castle'.

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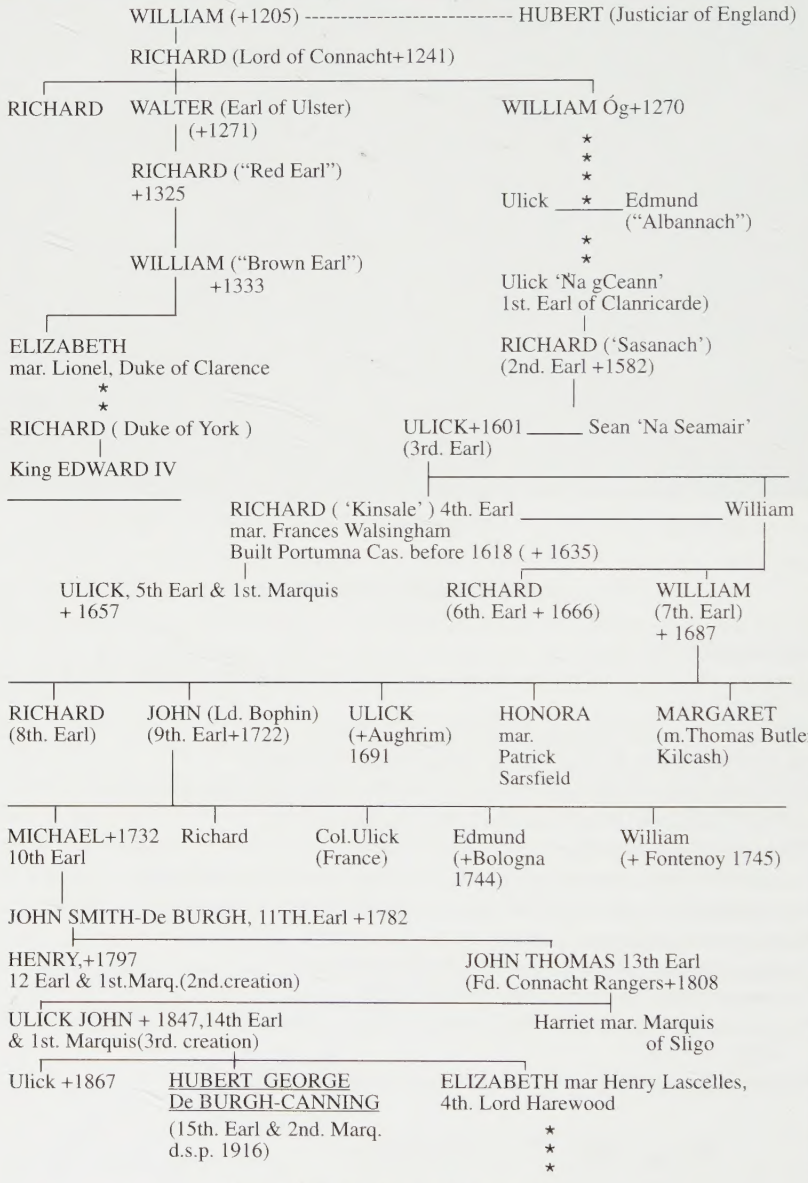
A SELECTIVE PEDIGREE OF THE FAMILY OF DE BURGH (BURKE)


WILLIAM (+1205) ---------- HUBERT (Justiciar of England)
RICHARD (Lord of Connacht+1241)
RICHARD
WALTER (Earl of Ulster) (+1271)
WILLIAM Óg+1270
RICHARD ("Red Earl") +1325
Ulick ___ Edmund ("Albannach")
WILLIAM ("Brown Earl") +1333
Ulick 'Na gCeann' 1st. Earl of Clanricarde)
ELIZABETH mar. Lionel, Duke of Clarence
RICHARD ('Sasanach') (2nd. Earl +1582)
RICHARD (Duke of York)
ULICK+1601 ____ Sean 'Na Seamair' (3rd. Earl)
King EDWARD IV
RICHARD ('Kinsale') 4th. Earl ____ William
mar. Frances Walsingham
Built Portumna Cas. before 1618 (+ 1635)
ULICK, 5th Earl & 1st. Marquis + 1657
RICHARD (6th. Earl + 1666)
WILLIAM (7th. Earl) + 1687
RICHARD (8th. Earl)
JOHN (Ld. Bophin) (9th. Earl+1722)
ULICK (+Aughrim) 1691
HONORA mar. Patrick Sarsfield
MARGARET (m.Thomas Butler, Kilcash)
MICHAEL+1732 10th Earl
Richard
Col.Ulick (France)
Edmund (+Bologna 1744)
William (+ Fontenoy 1745)
JOHN SMITH-De BURGH, 11TH.Earl +1782
HENRY,+1797 12 Earl & 1st.Marq.(2nd.creation)
JOHN THOMAS 13th Earl (Fd. Connacht Rangers+1808
ULICK JOHN + 1847,14th Earl & 1st. Marquis(3rd. creation)
Harriet mar. Marquis of Sligo
Ulick +1867
HUBERT GEORGE De BURGH-CANNING (15th. Earl & 2nd. Marq. d.s.p. 1916)
ELIZABETH mar Henry Lascelles, 4th. Lord Harewood
Henry Lascelles, 6th. Lord Harewood
married (1922) Mary (Princess Royal) dau. of GEO. V.

(*** denotes a break in succession)

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